

*Final
28 Feb*

Staff Department
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1949-1950

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 376TH INFANTRY
REGIMENT (94TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE SAAR-MOSELLE
TRIANGLE AT TETTINGEN, BUTZDORF, SOUTHWEST OF TRIER,
GERMANY, 14-18 JANUARY 1945

(ARDENNES-ALSACE CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of a Battalion Intelligence Officer)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION ATTACKING
AND HOLDING KEY FEATURES IN A FORTIFIED POSITION

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Battalion, 376th Infantry, 94th US Division in an attack which penetrated the SIEGFRIED Switch Line of the SAAR-MOSELLE Triangle and the subsequent defense of the towns of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF, GERMANY, 14-18 January 1945.

To fully appreciate the significance of this operation, it will be necessary to re-acquaint the reader with a major event which preceded and set the stage for this particular action. It was the middle of December 1944 that strong German forces launched the Von Rundstedt Offensive in the ARDENNES region. This enemy thrust necessitated re-directing the combined efforts of Allied Forces to reduce the salient affected, and to restore previously held positions. By the middle of January 1945 the "Bulge" had been about two-thirds reduced, both BASTOGNE and HOUFFALIZE were liberated. (1)

The bulk of General Patton's Third Army had moved abruptly to the north to counter this enemy thrust. Fearing that the enemy might initiate another powerful drive to encircle Third Army divisions attacking Rundstedt's forces from the south, the XX Corps had remained disposed in the SAAR-MOSELLE Triangle to protect the Third Army's south flank. (See Map A) (2)

(1) A-12, p. 196

(2) A-1, p. 82

The 94th US Division, having been in SHAEF reserve for a short period of time, was assigned to the XX Corps and moved into that zone on the 6-7 January 1945. (3)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

It is important that the reader becomes familiar with the terrain in that portion of GERMANY between the SAAR and MOSELLE rivers. The unique defenses that existed there must also be understood to fully appreciate the operation which is to be described.

The apex of the triangle is the confluence of the two rivers, its western and eastern legs are, respectively, the MOSELLE and the SAAR, and its 12 mile base is formed by the southern flank of a mountainous ridge running east and west between the rivers approximately 20 miles south of TRIER. It is along this mountainous ridge that the Germans constructed a zone of deeply fortified defensive works which extended as a switch position to the main defenses of the SIEGFRIED LINE, paralleling the SAAR and sited on its east bank. (4)

The triangle is bisected by an additional north-south ridge which extends perpendicular to the base of the triangle and provides excellent observation west to the MOSELLE RIVER and east to the SAAR RIVER from most any point along this MUNZINGEN RIDGE. This ridge is deeply cut by numerous small, short streams. About 1/3 of the triangle is dotted with numerous patches of woods which dominate the relatively open area between. The road network within the triangle, restricted as it is by difficult terrain, is not particularly suited to military operations. (See Map B) (5)

(3) A-1, p. 82
(4) A-1, p. 81
(5) A-5, p. 1

From a tactical standpoint the Germans placed great importance on the triangle because of the fact that any hostile force that held the high ground at its apex would be in a position to dominate the city of TRIER. This city, one of the chief communications centers of Western GERMANY, guarded the entrance to the MOSELLE Corridor, through which an attacker might drive to the RHINE. (6)

Third Army plans for implementation of a general offensive to the east, tentatively scheduled for the middle of February, 1945, necessitated the reduction of the SAAR-MOSELLE Triangle prior to that time. Failure to reduce the triangle would expose the left flank of the XX Corps to an attack which the enemy might prepare at his leisure behind the protective wall of his switch positions. Moreover, the requirements of sound tactics dictated that this flank of the XX Corps be somewhat less awkwardly disposed before resuming the advance to the east. (7)

Continued reduction of the German salient in the ARDENNES signaled the XX Corps to initiate the plan for a drive into the triangle. The Corp plan called for a clean breakthrough by the infantry before committing the armor. (8)

XX Corps planned for the 94th Division, a division whose previous combat experience had consisted of containing action at LORIENT and ST NAZAIRE, to be employed initially in a series of limited-objective attacks along the base of the triangle. This plan had the advantage of providing battle indoctrination for a comparatively new division. And more

(6) A-5, p. 1
(7) A-5, p. 1
(8) A-4, p. 16

important, the plan allowed XX Corps, without abandoning its defensive role, to tie down such enemy forces as were occupying the triangle and to frustrate whatever offensive intentions these forces might have. Also this plan might compel the enemy to divert to this secondary front some of the reserves originally intended to bolster his badly mauled armies in the ARDENNES. (9)

The 94th Division was occupying forward positions along the 12 mile base of the triangle. Confronting the division initially, on a line extending generally east and west across the triangle from ORSCHOLZ through OBERLEUKEN and TETTINGEN to NENNIG, was the enemy 416th Infantry Division, supported by elements of the 82nd Corps Artillery, and the XLI Fortress Battalion. (10)

The enemy defensive position in the switch line fortifications was known to be strong; for it was during the period 21-26 November 1944 that an attempt had been made, initially by the 3rd Cavalry Group, and then by CCA of the 10th Armored Division to advance north into the triangle and seize crossings over the SAAR RIVER at SAARBURG. The Germans, defending from these fortifications, had been able to stop this attack and affect a stabilized front along the base of the triangle. (11)

Since the 94th Division had not been engaged in sustained combat prior to this time, the division was at full strength and few key personnel had been lost. Realizing that the division now played an important role in the "big show", imbued men with a fighting spirit. Morale was excellent. The need for shoe packs to combat extreme cold, snow and slush was the chief concern of the division from the equipment standpoint.

(9) A-5, p. 3
(10) A-6, OB Annex
(11) A-5, p. 1

The Germans had been in the line for a long period; they were extremely well acquainted with their defensive positions. Their ammunition supply was comparatively low and food was generally poor. The fact that replacements continued to bolster their ranks and they had warm comfortable bunkers kept the Germans in prime fighting condition. (12)

Corp plans allowed the division ample opportunity to close into the new area and become acclimated to its new surroundings before initiating its series of limited-objective attacks into the base of the triangle. (13)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 376th INFANTRY

On 9 January 1945 the 376th Infantry occupied defensive positions extending east from BESCH, on the MOSELLE RIVER, through WOCHERN to BORG. (See Map B) The 1st and 2nd Battalions were abreast, 1st on the left, and the 3rd Battalion in regimental reserve in the vicinity of KIRSCH. (14)

Regiment planned for the 1st Battalion to seize and hold TETTINGEN; the 3rd Battalion would relieve the 1st Battalion of its defensive mission prior to the attack and make preparations to seize NENNIG, BERG and WIES later; the 2nd Battalion would protect the right flank of the 1st Battalion and constitute the regimental reserve when TETTINGEN was secured. (15)

THE BATTALION SITUATION (See Map C)

During the night 12-13 January, the 1st Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Russell M. Miner, was called to

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- (12) A-1, p. 87
(13) A-5, p. 3
(14) A-16
(15) A-2, pgs. 61-63

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the regimental command post at SIERCK to receive the Regimental Field Order. In essence, the order directed the battalion to:

"...atk at 140730 Jan. to seize and hold the town of TETTINGEN. Be prepared to repel counterattacks from the W, N or E." (16)

The order also provided for Company B, 607 Tank Destroyer Battalion and Company C, 319 Combat Engineers to be attached to the battalion for this operation. Priority of fires of the 919th and 390th Field Artillery Battalions (organic), the Regimental Cannon Company, the 5th Field Artillery Group (Corps) and Co. C 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion were allotted the 1st Battalion. (17)

From B Company's positions on the outpost line of resistance and A and C Company's positions along the main line of resistance, just north and south respectively of the line BESCH-WOCHERN, very little of the known enemy defenses could be seen. In order to develop the battalion situation, a series of patrols had been dispatched daily by the Battalion S-2 during the period 9-12 January. Their missions were to seek information by observing and probing enemy fortifications across the front of the battalion. With respect to TETTINGEN and the immediate surrounding area, the following information had been compiled: the town of TETTINGEN lies in saucer-like valley dominated by wooded terrain to the west; a gently

(16) A-2, p. 62

(17) A-3, p. 1

sloping ridge to the north and the abrupt 480 foot MUNZINGEN RIDGE immediately to the east; to the southwest of TETTINGEN a wooded area virtually connects TETTINGEN and WOCHERN except for 300-400 yards on the north and south; a jutting band of dragons teeth extended west off of MUNZINGEN RIDGE to a point approximately 300 yards south and west of TETTINGEN, solid except for a narrow gap across the WOCHERN-TETTINGEN road that appeared to be mined; that there was a deep anti-tank ditch in extension of these reinforced concrete dragons teeth extending generally west toward the MOSELLE RIVER; immediately behind the dragons teeth were well camouflaged concrete pillboxes and bunkers connected by communication trenches, two of these pillboxes just forward of TETTINGEN had been blown, presumably by elements of the 10th Armored Division during their unsuccessful attack some two months previously; only a few enemy had been observed digging additional communication trenches. The enemy was known to have registered his mortars and artillery on every approach to the position. The enemy strength in TETTINGEN was estimated to be a reinforced company. Then, too, regiment reported that the 10th Armored Division had planted antipersonnel mines and booby traps throughout the buildings in TETTINGEN prior to their withdrawal. (18)

At 130600 January Lieutenant Colonel Miner issued a warning order to his assembled company commanders and staff. He assigned tentative zones of attack to the companies so they could make preliminary preparations for the attack which was

(18) A-3, p. 1

now scheduled for 14 January.

The entire day of 13 January was spent in making preparations and reconnoitering the assigned zones of action. Reconnaissance parties consisting of company commanders, platoon leaders and squad leaders worked their way along concealed routes as far forward as the dragons teeth in order to select forward assembly areas, prospective lines of departure and study their respective objectives. Lieutenant Colonel Miner and members of the staff also completed their reconnaissance and formulated plans.

A foot of snow covered the area. Freezing winds swept the landscape continuously. Vehicles were unable to negotiate many of the steep hills, this necessitated hand carry for long distances. (19)

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK (20)
(See Map C)

The battalion staff, company commanders and attached organization commanders were assembled at the battalion command post in PERL at 131600 Jan 45 to receive the battalion commander's plan of attack, the essential elements of which were contained in Field Order #27:

"Maps: Kirf, 1/25,000

1. a. See Overlay

b. 2d Bn holds present position. 3d Bn relieves this Bn of present mission 1800, 13 Jan 45.
Sptg Arty - see Annex #1
Co C, 81st Chem Mortar - see Annex #1
Cn Co - see Annex #1

(19) Personal knowledge
(20) A-3, p. 2

2. This Bn (Co B, 607 TD SP, Co C 319th Engrs atchd) atks to seize and hold TETTINGEN (L0402). H hour 0730. Dir 39° Mag Az. Formation, LD, bds, - see overlay
3. Co A - obj: see overlay and sketch, frtg 150 yds, right on rd 1-3
 Co C - obj: see overlay and sketch, atk on left of Co A.
 Co B - Follow Co C 500 yds. Protect Bn left flank. Be prepared resist en counteratk, particularly from NW.
 Co D - 1st Plat HMG - initial positions vic 320, fire on pillbox 340, displace to obj upon capture.
 2d Plat HMG - follow Co C to edge of Q, fire on pillboxes dir V, displace to obj upon capture.
 Mort Plat - positions to fire on P, 340, and V.
 Co B, 607 TD SP-1 plat move on obj immediately after capture for positions vs tank atk.
 2 plats await O vic WOCHERN
 Co C, 319th Engrs - 1 sqd atchd ea R Co clear booby traps
 1 sqd clear mines on rd to obj.
 1 sqd and dozer prepare covered route thru Q to obj.
 Bn AT Plat - await O vic present position.
4. AM SP - WOCHERN
 Bn Aid Sta - WOCHERN
 other details later
5. SOI in effect
 Radio silence until H hour
 White star cluster - Call for defensive fire
 Green star cluster - Lift Arty fire
 Amber star prcht - Recognition to friendly aircraft by fwd troops
 Bn CP - WOCHERN
 Co CPs - select and rpt" (21)

The line of departure would be the northeast edge of the heavily wooded area southwest of TETTINGEN; H hour 0730 hours 14 January 1945. The line of departure had been established as close as possible to the objective so that A and C companies could cross abreast in assault formations.

(21) A-14

D Company was to support the attack in accordance with the recommendations made to the battalion commander. One platoon of heavy machine guns would establish positions on the high ground 300 yards NE of WOCHERN with the mission of firing on the pillboxes east of TETTINGEN and along the western slopes of MUNZINGEN RIDGE. The other platoon of machine guns to follow and be in direct support of C Company. The 81mm mortars to set up 300 yards west of WOCHERN to fire on call. The 4.2" mortars would establish positions in WOCHERN and smoke MUNZINGEN RIDGE. Artillery would commence firing on TETTINGEN at H minus 20, lift to BUTZDORF at H hour and fire until H plus 10. All artillery would then shift to fire concentrations on designated suspected enemy observation posts, mortar positions, and pillboxes on the high ground to the east, north and west.

Engineers that had assisted in booby-trapping TETTINGEN during the withdrawal of elements of the 10th Armored Division, two months previously, were made available to assist riflemen in neutralizing any of these same booby-traps that the Germans may not have detonated.

Fully realizing that an enemy counterattack would be eminent, the battalion plan also provided for an immediate defense. C Company would be responsible for all of TETTINGEN west of the WOCHERN-BUTZDORF road; A Company would defend from the north and east. B Company to remain in an assembly area in the woods south of TETTINGEN and be prepared to counter-attack to the west, north or east. Previously designated positions had been plotted on a town plan for each of D

Company's automatic weapons and the tank destroyers of Company B, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Pre-arranged artillery and mortar barrages, and concentrations, would completely ring the town.

The battalion command post (rear) would be established in WOCHERN. During the late afternoon and evening of the 13th the battalion command group and all other administrative personnel displaced by infiltration to WOCHERN. Both wire and radio communications would be coordinated with regiment, supporting, attached and subordinate units by the battalion communications officer. Last minute preparations were made to extend wire lines and establish a forward command post when the objective was captured.

Arrangements were made to feed a hot breakfast, issue ammunition and 2/3 of a C ration, and prepare light combat packs in the rear assembly areas.

MOVEMENT TO THE LINE OF DEPARTURE AND FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR

THE ATTACK (22)
(See Map C)

After a hot breakfast in PERL at 0500 on 14 January, companies A, C and D moved to WOCHERN in that order of march. HQ and B companies had spent the night 13-14 January in WOCHERN. Attachments were made, supporting weapons were placed in position and last minute checks were made by all commanders. The rifle companies moved silently through the woods in the order A, C, B toward the forward assembly areas, just in rear of the line of departure.

(22) Personal knowledge

A and C companies arrived in the vicinity of the line of departure at approximately 0700. An additional check was made to insure that all personnel were present and properly disposed in their attack positions. There was no need for additional instructions, for each individual was completely aware of his mission. The first grey streaks of light were beginning to appear over MUNZINGEN RIDGE as lead riflemen strained their eyes to get a glimpse of their objective, some 500 yards to the north.

NARRATION

THE ATTACK ON TETTINGEN (See Map D)

After 20 minutes of intense artillery fire on TETTINGEN, A and C Companies crossed the line of departure at exactly 0730 hours on 14 January 1945. The 4.2" mortars continued to drop fountains of white phosphorous along the ridge east of TETTINGEN as D company's heavy machine guns sent streams of tracers toward all visible and suspected pillboxes.

A and C companies moved in rapidly toward the objective. As the lead men of C Company crossed the antitank ditch to the west of town they observed several Germans running to the north out of TETTINGEN, at least three were cut down by the rifle fire of the advancing infantry. As one file of infantrymen from A company dashed through the gap in the dragons teeth along the WOCHERN-TETTINGEN road, they caught several rounds of enemy mortar fire, the first casualties were left on the snow behind them. It was still too dark to see much, but the bursting of shells outlined the dark running shapes of the men as they pushed into town. The pillboxes in and around the town had become active and were sending bursts

of machine gun fire down streets and through gaps between buildings. The buildings appeared empty except for a few rounds of sporadic rifle fire coming from some basements. After a solid union was effected between A and C Companies in the north of town buildings were methodically hand-grenaded, then stormed. Twenty-three frightened Germans were routed from the cellars and quickly marched to WOCHERN.

By 0815, the 1st Battalion was in undisputed possession of their first major objective. Organization of the defenses progressed according to pre-arranged plans. Company C, led by Captain Edwin E. Duckworth, established men in the buildings and existing communications trenches to the west and northwest of town. The 60mm mortars were positioned in the ruins of the two blown pillboxes on the south of town. Captain Carl J. Shetler, commander of A Company, hurriedly checked his men as they prepared their defense of the north and east of the town. In addition, he dispatched a small patrol to reconnoiter the pillboxes 300 yards to the east of town. This group worked its way to the base of MUNZINGEN RIDGE and located four or five well camouflaged pillboxes. Voices could be heard coming from these fortifications; however, the patrol had no means of breaching the concrete and therefore withdrew.

During the course of the attack quite a crowd had gathered at the battalion observation post to witness the attack. Those present from higher headquarters included the Assistant Division Commander, the Regimental Commander, the Division G-3, G-2 and Engineer Officer. The success of the attack so impressed them that they saw no reason why it should not continue. Orders were issued at this time by Colonel Harold H. McClune,

the regimental commander, to continue the attack at 1000 hours to seize the town of BUTZDORF, some 1000 yards north of TETTINGEN.

It was now about 0830 hours. Lieutenant Colonel Miner contacted Captain Shetler by radio and informed him of the new plan for continuation of the attack. A Company would attack from TETTINGEN to seize BUTZDORF and prepare a perimeter defense to repel counterattack. The attack would be preceded by a ten minute artillery preparation. One platoon of machine guns from D Company and one squad of engineers would be attached to A Company.

Immediately following issuance of the new order, Lieutenant Colonel Miner and his S-2 went to TETTINGEN and selecting a forward observation post from which to direct the new assault. It is significant to note that the original observation post received a heavy concentration of enemy artillery immediately following the departure of the regimental commander and the division staff officers. Of the two enlisted men from the battalion intelligence section, that had been left to man the observation post, one was killed and the other badly wounded.

Lieutenant Colonel Miner arrived in TETTINGEN about 0900 hours and found Captain Shetler busily engaged in reforming his men and issuing orders for the seizure of BUTZDORF. By this time enemy artillery and mortar fire had increased greatly, thus hampering A Company's efforts to consolidate men already busily engaged in completing the defenses of TETTINGEN.

The reconnaissance patrol sent out earlier from A Company returned at approximately 0930 to report its findings. Based

upon the report of the patrol, Captain Shetler recommended that pillboxes east of TETTINGEN be reduced prior to an attack on BUTZDORF. Automatic weapons in these pillboxes were sited to bring grazing fire to bear on any portion of the flat open terrain leading to the new objective. The orders received from the regimental commander forced Lieutenant Colonel Miner to reject Captain Shetler's recommendations. C Company was directed to shift one platoon so as to assume responsibility for that portion of the town defenses originally assigned A Company.

Captain Shetler disposed his company for the attack with two platoons abreast and one in support. The company command group would follow the right platoon. D Company's heavy machine gun platoon would follow the support platoon. Like TETTINGEN, BUTZDORF was also bisected by a north-south road passing through it. The 1st platoon was directed to seize and hold the buildings west of the road; the 2nd platoon was assigned the east portion; the 3rd platoon would be responsible for the southern edge. A coordinated fire plan for the defense would be worked out later. (23)

THE ATTACK ON BUTZDORF

It was 1007 hours before lead platoons of A Company were sufficiently well organized to move toward the objective. Captain Shetler called for and received ~~an~~ additional five minutes of artillery on BUTZDORF beginning about 1010. Initially movement was rapid; however, enemy observers who had been watching this new development from pillboxes along MUNZINGEN RIDGE soon delivered the full weight of their

(23) Personal knowledge

artillery, mortars and grazing machine gun fire which pinned the attackers to the ground. It was during this hail of fire that Captain Shetler and his 300 radio operator were killed. The radio was rendered inoperative; thus no contact existed with battalion. Leading elements of the company had advanced to a point opposite a large building about one-half way to the objective before being pinned down. Fifteen casualties in the company were sustained before Lieutenant Creighton, leader of the 1st platoon, scrambled to his feet and urged his men to rush the remaining distance to the objective. The other platoons followed.

The company executive officer, Lieutenant David F. Stafford, came forward from TETTINGEN without delay to assume command and direct the mopping up and defense of the town. The only effective means of communication with the battalion commander was by messenger.

By 1113 hours the town had been searched and defenses were being prepared in anticipation of the counterattack which was almost sure to come. Only four prisoners were captured, a mortar crew was surprised and annihilated and several more of the enemy had been observed running to the north. The four heavy machine guns were placed to insure grazing fire on the natural and more likely avenues of approach. A finger-like salient, more than a mile deep, had been driven into the enemy defenses.

The intensity of enemy artillery and mortar fire on BUTZDORF made it apparent to Lieutenant Colonel Miner and Lieutenant Stafford that re-supply and wire communications could not be made possible until after dark. (24)

(24) Personal knowledge

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN TETTINGEN AND BUTZDORF THE FIRST DAY

About 1300 hours, some 50 men were observed walking in two files down the western slope of MUNZINGEN RIDGE toward TETTINGEN. Initially it was assumed that they were prisoners being marched in by a patrol from C Company which Lieutenant Colonel Miner had ordered into that area at 1130 hours to blow some particularly bothersome pillboxes. As the men came nearer, they were definitely identified as armed Germans. The entire C Company platoon situated on the east of town readied its weapons as mortar and artillery forward observers relayed fire orders. As though carefully planned, each rifleman began to fire almost simultaneously when the Germans came within 400 yards of the platoon positions. Artillery and mortars were soon adjusted on the Germans as they assumed prone positions in the snow on the slope of the ridge. A few of the enemy disappeared in the nearby pillboxes, however the majority were killed.

At 1335 hours, Lieutenant Colonel Miner ordered B Company forward from its reserve position to strengthen the defenses of TETTINGEN on the east. To strengthen the defenses of BUTZDORF, the B Company commander, Captain Henry C. Bowden, was ordered to release one platoon for immediate attachment to A Company. The platoon, accompanied by forward observers from the artillery, cannon company and mortars rushed across the open area to BUTZDORF without incident. One man carried a new 300 radio for A Company.

Meanwhile the demolition patrol, composed of men from C Company and four or five engineers, worked their way to the

first two pillboxes and continued toward the third while the engineers prepared these two for demolition. Enemy rifle fire from around the third pillbox forced the patrol to withdraw, leaving one man killed. As the patrol withdrew, the engineers primed the charges on the first two pillboxes and joined the patrol. The resulting explosions did no perceptible damage.

A short time later, a 12 man enemy patrol in perfect V formation, was observed by men of B Company. This patrol followed much the same route as the 50 men observed about an hour earlier. A D Company machine gun engaged this group at about 500 yards. Only one man was seen to get up and run into a nearby pillbox.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent in completing the defenses of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF. The two towns were ringed with artillery and mortar barrages and concentrations and machine guns sighted along final protective lines. The battalion antitank platoon leader recommended that the antitank guns be dug in on a small ridge 300 yards south of TETTINGEN so that the guns and crews would not be subjected to the continuous enemy artillery and mortar fire landing in the town. This recommendation was accepted by the battalion commander as the four tank destroyers were already positioned to cover the likely avenues of armored approach. The engineers placed mines across all roads leading into the two towns. Wire teams worked continuously to maintain existing lines and lay new ones down to and including platoons. Lieutenant Colonel Miner issued complete instructions to the battalion executive officer, Major Sam Roper, for feeding ten-in-one rations and completely re-supplying the battalion after dark.

About 1700 hours the regimental commander informed Lieutenant Colonel Miner that the 3rd Battalion would launch an attack at daylight on the 15th to capture the towns of NENNIG, BERG and WIES. (See Map C)

An estimated 44 Germans were killed during the day and an undetermined number wounded. (25)

THE FIRST NIGHT IN TETTINGEN AND BUTZDORF (See Map D)

After dark ten-in-one rations and all types of ammunition were brought into TETTINGEN by jeep. A forty-man carrying party from A Company evacuated wounded to TETTINGEN and returned with food and ammunition. All casualties were evacuated from TETTINGEN to the battalion aid station in WOCHERN by jeep. Wire communication was tied in between A Company and the forward battalion command post, which was now situated in a basement on the south side of TETTINGEN.

Patrols were sent out. Lieutenant Colonel Miner ordered B Company to maintain a three man contact patrol along the road to WOCHERN. In addition, he directed A Company to send a four man patrol up the draw extending east from BUTZDORF to locate mortars which had fired from there during the day. Another four man patrol from A Company reconnoitered to the wooded area northwest of BUTZDORF. These patrols reported enemy movement and voices to the north and west of town, the mortars had withdrawn.

Beginning at 0440 hours on 15 January, intense enemy artillery and mortar fire fell on WOCHERN, TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF simultaneously. The intensity of this fire alerted everyone immediately. Wire communication that had operated

perfectly a few minutes before was now completely disrupted. Radio contact was quickly established, however, and Lieutenant Colonel Miner was assured that each company was already alerted for any eventuality. A few minutes later, loud German voices could be heard approaching both BUTZDORF and TETTINGEN from the northwest. The expected counterattack had become a reality.

Pre-arranged mortar and artillery fires were called for as machine gunners laid on their final protective lines and fired toward the voices in the darkness. One group of Germans advanced up the antitank ditch to the west of TETTINGEN and succeeded in capturing the nearest building from six men of C Company who were forced to withdraw. These same men arranged for mortar fire on the building and urged one tank destroyer crew to destroy the building with its 90mm gun. Individual Germans managed to crawl between the buildings on the west side of TETTINGEN and throw grenades in the windows. Their automatic weapons sprayed the buildings from short ranges. Friendly artillery and mortar fire was called in as close as 50 yards. All organic and supporting weapons fired continuously until dawn. The firing gradually relaxed as the situation clarified.

The enemy main effort had been directed at TETTINGEN with the apparent mission of cutting off and surrounding the 1st Battalion. BUTZDORF received considerable action too, however. By 0755 hours, all firing had ceased; an undetermined number of enemy were sighted hurriedly withdrawing to the north. The blackened snow to the west of TETTINGEN was littered with

dead and wounded Germans. Many had advanced within arms length of the buildings before becoming casualties. (26)

In repelling the counterattack, more than 32,000 rounds of caliber .30 ammunition was expended by the heavy machine guns of D Company. The 81mm mortar platoon had fired some 4,000 rounds from its position near WOCHERN. The 919th Field Artillery Battalion alone had expended nearly 3,000 rounds of 105mm. (27)

THE SECOND DAY AND NIGHT IN TETTINGEN AND BUTZDORF

At daylight on 15 January, Lieutenant Colonel Miner made a detailed check of the defenses of TETTINGEN and personally commended every individual contacted for their part in repelling the early morning counterattack. Though the enemy had succeeded in capturing a few buildings on the perimeter of the town, the buildings were all recaptured and the defenses completely restored by 0815. Periodic checks by radio with A Company in BUTZDORF assured Lieutenant Colonel Miner that the enemy had failed to pierce their defenses. One man killed and several wounded were the only casualties for the battalion.

Later in the morning the battalion medical personnel ventured beyond the buildings to render aid to the wounded Germans. Many of the enemy considered dead, began to drag their virtually frozen bodies forward to beg for assistance. Between 30 and 35 men were found to be alive, but wounded. Other Germans were found hiding in trenches and skulking in nearby woods. In all, some 60 to 70 prisoners were rounded up prior to 1200 hours. Some 125 dead were counted

(26) Personal knowledge

(27) A-1, p. 97

lying on the snow to the west of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF and in the open area between the two towns. (28)

A cursory interrogation of several prisoners by the battalion S-2 revealed that the force which had counter-attacked the 1st battalion was the 416th Field Replacement Battalion, 416 Infantry Division. This battalion was composed of four companies, having a total strength of about 400 men. (29)

During the morning, the battalion Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon formed carrying parties to replenish the dwindled ammunition supply. Wire teams laid a new line between the battalion rear and forward command posts and repaired the many breaks in all other existing lines. Company mess personnel brought forward a hot meal to their respective companies in the afternoon. This re-supply to TETTINGEN was carried on with relative safety, for the engineers had the day before cleared a concealed jeep road through the woods from WOCHERN to the line of dragons teeth south of TETTINGEN. It was only while traversing the open area between these obstacles, and the first buildings in town, that each carrying party was observed from enemy observation posts on MUNZINGEN RIDGE and shelled.

A Company in BUTZDORF received the brunt of the artillery and mortar fire throughout the day. Instead of attempting to use the streets, men employed one pound charges of nitro starch and breached walls to provide covered routes for movement between positions. Mess personnel attempting to bring the hot meal into town were caught in a mortar barrage.

(28) A-14, p. 8

(29) A-7 , OB Annex

which destroyed the marmite and water cans, and rendered the food and water a complete loss. Luckily, the company had stock-piled sufficient ten-in-one rations the evening before, which allowed individuals and small groups to prepare their own hot meal. Water was a major problem. When the first man to visit the town pump was shot for his efforts, all other personnel resorted to melting snow to quench their thirsts.

About 1500 hours, Lieutenant Colonel Miner was informed by the regimental S-3 that the 3rd Battalion had captured NENNIG and BERG and would clear WIES momentarily. The regimental commander ordered the 1st and 3rd Battalions to establish contact with patrols at a specifically designated pillbox situated midway between TETTINGEN and NENNIG. Upon hearing of this mission, Major Roper recommended that a patrol be organized from among those engineers who had been resting in WOCHERN since completing their road building mission the day before. This recommendation was accepted by Lieutenant Colonel Miner, since all troops in TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF needed rest. Captain Rose, the attached engineer company commander, willingly volunteered to lead a 10 man patrol to establish this contact. As the patrol approached the TETTINGEN-NENNIG road it received enemy rifle fire from short range. Captain Rose withdrew his patrol a short distance and detoured to the south and west, and was able to proceed to within 50 yards of the designated contact point before receiving heavy mortar fire. The patrol again withdrew a short distance and scanned the terrain for the 3rd battalion

patrol. After approximately one-half hour in this position, the patrol withdrew to WOCHERN without having made the desired contact.

Just before dark, Lieutenant Colonel Miner personally checked the defenses of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF with each company commander to insure that all was in readiness for what the hours of darkness may bring.

At about 1900 hours the regimental S-2 called to relay important information of enemy activity as viewed earlier in the day by Tactical Air Reconnaissance. Elements of a large armored force had been sighted crossing the SAAR RIVER in the vicinity of SAARBURG and were presumably moving south in the triangle. This information was disseminated to all subordinate commanders within the battalion.

In light of the new information concerning enemy activities, carrying parties already engaged in bringing ammunition, food, water and other needed supplies into town, were ordered to make their ammunition loads predominately bazooka rounds. Lieutenant Colonel Miner also directed A Company to organize additional listening posts on the perimeter of BUTZDORF and report any unusual noises immediately.

A patrol was dispatched from C Company to further investigate additional pillboxes to the northeast of TETTINGEN. The patrol accomplished its mission without incident, and reported the existence of one pillbox and four or five bunkers. The pillbox was sited to fire in the direction of BUTZDORF only. It was believed that all installations were occupied, for voices had been heard from within.

Two half-hearted counterattacks were repelled about midnight. The first of these was directed against the right flank of B Company and was estimated to consist of not over 40 to 50 riflemen. C Company stopped a similar thrust supported by four tanks directed at the west of TETTINGEN. Automatic weapons, bazookas, mortars and artillery were employed to drive off the attackers. Two tanks were believed to have received bazooka hits, however, all four retreated hastily to the northwest after a short skirmish followed by those infantrymen not killed. Judging from their apparent lack of will to become wholeheartedly engaged, it was conjectured by Lieutenant Colonel Miner and his staff that these thrusts represented a reconnaissance in force.

Meanwhile back in WOCHERN, Lieutenant Springer of the 81mm mortar platoon was forced to move his mortars to a supplementary position because of increased enemy mortar and artillery fire falling within the platoon area. The entire 2nd Battalion closed into town during the night to constitute the regimental reserve. Increased activity resulting from this move was the signal for the Germans to periodically hit the town with artillery and rocket fire. Although riflemen of the 1st Battalion termed WOCHERN "the rear area", nine men had been killed and twenty-four wounded there. One direct hit by a 120mm mortar on a weapons carrier killed an entire 57mm antitank gun crew and damaged the gun and vehicle. (30)

(30) Personal knowledge

THE THIRD DAY AND NIGHT IN TETTINGEN AND BUTZDORF

At daylight on the 16th, the 2nd Battalion was committed to clear the pillboxes and woods still held by the enemy between the two widely separated salients of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. With the exception of five pillboxes near NENNIG, the enemy was cleared from this area prior to noon. F Company remained on the newly won positions to form the connecting link which provided the regiment a continuous front line extending from the MOSELLE RIVER through NENNIG to TETTINGEN. The left flank of the 1st Battalion was now slightly more secure.

Only intermittent artillery and mortar fire fell on TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF during the day. The men were able to get some much needed rest despite the below freezing temperature. Small carrying parties infiltrated through the woods from WOCHERN all during the day to deliver supplies of all types to B and C Companies and stockpile desired items for A Company until they could be further carried under the cover of darkness. (31)

About 1800 hours, the regimental commander directed the 1st battalion to eliminate the pillboxes and bunkers to the east and northeast of TETTINGEN. Lieutenant Colonel Miner planned for a platoon-sized patrol composed of infantrymen from C Company and a squad of attached engineers to blow these fortifications. This seemed like a momentous task for men armed only with rifles and 50 pound satchel charges. The first bunker encountered was found to be empty; the engineers placed 1000 pounds of nitro-starch and ignited

(31) Personal knowledge

the charge which subsequently crumpled the concrete. An adjacent bunker was found occupied and as the riflemen surrounded the installation, the engineers placed a 150 pound satchel charge against its steel door. When detonated, this charge appeared effective, but the patrol was unable to make a detailed inspection for an enemy mortar barrage forced it to withdraw. (32)

No counterattacks were received that night but the enemy continued to pour mortar and artillery fire on the supply and communication lines.

THE FOURTH DAY AND NIGHT IN TETTINGEN AND BUTZDORF

The next morning, 17 January, saw TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF blanketed with a heavy fog. It was late in the morning before the bunkers blown by the C Company patrol during the night could be observed. Both charges had taken effect. The doorless bunker was clearly visible from the furthest building in the northeast of TETTINGEN. A German medic, accompanied by another German soldier, walked into town carrying a white flag and requested permission to evacuate the wounded from the bunker. Lieutenant Colonel Miner granted this permission, but ordered the accompanying soldier detained. A short while later a German half-track appeared over the hill and as several men of the battalion carefully observed, seven wounded were carried out of the bunker and loaded in this vehicle.

About noon, the regimental commander informed Lieutenant Colonel Miner that the 1st Battalion would have to assume responsibility for that portion of the line now being held between NENNIG and TETTINGEN by F Company. B Company was

withdrawn from TETTINGEN and moved over a circuitous route to the west to replace F Company. It was necessary for Captain Bowden to place all three of his remaining platoons along the 1000 yard front for which his company was responsible. Five isolated pillboxes approximately 500 yards to the left rear of B Company were still occupied by Germans, the 2nd Battalion had been unable to reduce them.

Assignment of this new mission to B Company once again necessitated C Company to assume full responsibility for the defense of TETTINGEN.

Throughout the day gray overcast skies blended with the snow covered ground, preventing aerial reconnaissance. No information was received regarding further movements of the armored column sighted the day before. A few prisoners captured late in the day provided proof that the enemy had reinforced his line along the ridge north of BUTZDORF with at least one battalion of the German 714th Grenadier Regiment. This regiment had last been reported in an assembly area east of the SAAR RIVER.

A German broadcast from Berlin, picked up at regimental headquarters during the evening, lent further credence to the fact that something big was in store for the 1st Battalion defenders. The newscast not only told of heavy fighting in the SAAR-MOSELLE Triangle, but intimated that there was more to come.

Continued reports from regiment of a Panzer Division in the area, coupled with sounds of track-laying vehicles, indicated to Lieutenant Colonel Miner that extensive antitank

precautions must be taken. Additional supplies of bazooka ammunition were brought forward along with the rations. The attached engineer platoon laid additional mines across approaches into BUTZDORF and strung some 50 mines in a belt along the east side of TETTINGEN. All roads leading into both towns had daisy chains across them. Satchel charges and pole charges were prepared and placed in readiness. Everyone waited in nervous anticipation for something big to happen.

About midnight tanks were heard moving south along MUNZINGEN RIDGE; two or three seemed to be jockeying for positions just north of BUTZDORF. The battalion waited, watched and listened. At about 0300 hours an A Company patrol, that had been dispatched earlier to the northwest from BUTZDORF, returned with two prisoners that were captured while laying a wire line toward town. These Germans were readily identified as members of the 11th Panzer (Ghost) Division.

Lieutenant Colonel Miner, still not entirely pleased with the battalion antitank defenses, requested regiment to attach one platoon from the regimental Antitank Company. This request was granted and by 0500 the platoon was on its way from the vicinity of the regimental command post at PERL. This request was deemed advisable since only two guns of the battalion antitank platoon were operative and they were already employed to cover that part of MUNZINGEN RIDGE east of TETTINGEN.

It was nearly dawn when some members of the battalion felt that the anticipated enemy tank attack would not

materialize, so dropped off to sleep after a long night of waiting, watching and listening. (33)

THE LAST DAY IN TETTINGEN AND BUTZDORF (See Map D)

Precisely at 0720 hours, 18 January, a veritable storm broke. For 20 minutes everyone was forced to find cover deep in their defensive positions as 80mm, 88mm, 105mm, 120mm and 150mm shells crashed into TETTINGEN, BUTZDORF and WOCHERN as well. Even in the woods west of TETTINGEN, B Company received some of the same fire as it burst in the trees over their frozen fox holes. (34)

By 0740 hours, the enemy preparation subsided and the sound of bursting shells was replaced with the roar of tank motors. From the upper floor of the battalion command post building, Lieutenant Colonel Miner noted that enemy tanks had virtually surrounded TETTINGEN and were systematically firing their cannons into the buildings on the perimeter. A similar report was received from A Company. Lieutenant Colonel Miner called for all-around defensive mortar and artillery fires for both towns. It was about this time that the platoon of attached antitank guns from the regimental Antitank Company drove into TETTINGEN. As they entered, a German tank situated in the cemetery 300 yards to the southeast of town brought the column under fire. The lead vehicle and gun received a direct hit and began to burn, both the platoon leader and platoon sergeant along with other men were wounded. The remaining guns attempted to get into position as best they could while under fire. The battalion antitank leader, Lieutenant John Wilz, reported that the

(33) Personal knowledge

(34) A-1, p. 120

initial enemy barrage had knocked out another of his guns and forced the remaining crew to withdraw from its positions. Lieutenant Colonel Miner ordered Lieutenant Wilz to get that gun into town and coordinate the fires of all other 57mm guns. During these confused minutes, one friendly tank destroyer made a hasty withdrawal toward WOCHERN for no apparent reason.

At the same time, the defenders of BUTZDORF brought the fire of all available weapons to bear on a widely dispersed group of personnel carriers supported by four self propelled guns and three MK IV tanks, advancing on the town from the north. Additional personnel carriers filled with infantrymen and more tanks joined the attacking force from the northeast. Despite the coordinated defensive fires, the enemy force rolled forward in a giant arc. As the right of the attack hit BUTZDORF, the left by-passed the town and struck at TETTINGEN from the east.

A Company received the brunt of the initial thrust. An assault gun, leading the attack struck a mine and was immobilized. Two personnel carriers loaded with Germans maneuvered around the gun only to be knocked out by bazooka fire. As the enemy dismounted they were either killed or taken prisoner and herded into the nearest cellar. Additional personnel carriers, advancing under the protective fire of their supporting tanks and self propelled guns, managed to breach the defenses and disgorge their loads of infantrymen before withdrawing to the north. The Germans managed to occupy two lightly held houses on the north of the town.

Meanwhile the left of the attacking force hit TETTINGEN. The men of C Company observed four personnel carriers, two tanks and a self propelled gun as they swung around in column some 300 yards out of town. One of the personnel carriers hit a mine; its crew and infantrymen leaped to the ground and sought cover behind the vehicle. A bazooka halted one of the tanks but failed to silence its cannon. The other tank maneuvered to a hull defiladed position from which it supported the attack. The remaining personnel carriers halted in a broadside position 300 yards to the east and the enemy infantrymen began to dismount. Only a few of the attacking infantrymen managed to escape the heavy volume of rifle and automatic weapons fire and withdraw to the safety of the pillboxes to the east. Round after round of bazooka ammunition fired at the halted personnel carriers failed to detonate. The carriers later withdrew apparently unharmed. Three or four tanks positioned to the east of town continued to fire into buildings and at anyone that moved along the streets. The one remaining antitank gun of the battalion was finally maneuvered into position; only one round was necessary to set fire to a German tank at 300 yards range. As the crew struggled to take their gun out of action, an enemy mortar round landed among them. Most of the crew were wounded and the trails of the gun were jammed.

Noting that the remaining three tank destroyers had failed to fire a single round at the many choice targets, Lieutenant Colonel Miner personally investigated. The platoon leader of the tank destroyers was no where to be

found and the crews were seeking refuge in nearby cellars rather than manning their guns. Lieutenant Colonel Miner ordered these men to assume firing positions in their tank destroyers and then braved enemy fire to point out targets to them. It was only after these tank destroyers had gone into action and knocked out two more enemy tanks that the situation began to clarify.

In addition to the two buildings captured in BUTZDORF, enemy infantrymen had also secured four buildings in the north end of TETTINGEN, and the large half-way-house between the two towns. From these positions the enemy sniped at all individuals attempting to cross between buildings. At least four tanks had penetrated the defenses of BUTZDORF and were firing their cannons point-blank into the buildings still held by A Company. The situation appeared desperate, yet the company continued its determined resistance and the tanks were knocked out one by one with bazookas and satchel charges.

Shortly after 0900 hours, the attack spent itself and the remaining operative enemy vehicles withdrew, presumably to reorganize. Artillery observers in liaison aircraft continued to call fire missions on the enemy as they re-assembled to the north.

Lieutenant Colonel Miner directed A and C Companies to regain the buildings lost to the enemy without delay. In addition, emphasis was placed on strengthening the anti-tank defenses of both towns. The tank destroyer platoon leader was located in WOCHERN and ordered to return with the one tank destroyer that had withdrawn during the heat

of the enemy attack. Though these guns remained in TETTINGEN, some were positioned so that they could effectively cover to the north and flanks of BUTZDORF.

Both A and C Companies regained the buildings temporarily occupied by the enemy. The 16 prisoners captured by C Company were promptly interrogated by the division IPW Team that had arrived in TETTINGEN to get some anxiously desired information for Corps and Army concerning the 11th Panzer Division.

From its position, B Company observed men and vehicles assembling in the woods some 500 yards to the north of them. Captain Bowden called for artillery and mortar fire on the assembly area. This information was relayed to battalion and everyone was alerted for further enemy activity.

At about 1045 hours, the Germans launched another attack similar in size and formation to the one earlier. Forward observers in BUTZDORF, having good observation at this time, were able to direct fire directly on the attackers. This concentration of fire from seven battalions of artillery, one company of the regimental Cannon Company, one company of 4.2" mortars and the 1st Battalion 81mm mortar platoon dispersed the enemy and forced them to retire.

Back at the battalion rear command post, Major Roper assembled as many men as possible and formed carrying parties to get needed ammunition of all types to the forward companies.

At about 1130 hours, the Germans launched the third attack of the morning. This force consisted of 10 tanks only. They maneuvered in a huge semicircular arc some 800-1000 yards to the north and east of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF.

After assuming concealed and hull defiladed positions, they began pounding the buildings with armor piercing and high explosive shells. The major portion of this fire was directed at BUTZDORF. A Company left one man in each building to observe for attacking infantry, while the remainder of the company sought cover in the cellars.

In TETTINGEN, Lieutenant Colonel Miner and his staff called for every imaginable supporting fire to eliminate the enemy tanks. Nothing proved effective. From their positions on the commanding ridge, the tanks were relatively immune from tank destroyer fire from the valley below.

At 1430 hours, the enemy launched its fourth attack of the day against the weary defenders of BUTZDORF. Some 15 armored vehicles, preceded by grenadiers on foot, swept over the same ridge to the north of town and moved swiftly toward their objective. They were fired on by all possible supporting weapons, but still they advanced, as though determined that nothing should stop this attack. As they got within 200 yards of the town, all guns fired final protective fires. Many of the enemy advancing on foot were killed and wounded but others rushed forward. As the armored vehicles approached the town, they paused just long enough for the infantry to dismount and crouch behind them. Several tanks that had been firing on BUTZDORF from the ridge to the east advanced into town and were roaming the streets more or less at will, firing through windows and doors and knocking down walls. All during the afternoon, the dismounted infantrymen rushed the town only to be driven back to regroup behind their armored vehicles.

By 1700 hours, bazooka ammunition was completely exhausted and other types dangerously low. Many men had been killed or wounded, which necessitated giving up some buildings and consolidating positions in the center and southern portions of the town. An unknown number of the enemy occupied the northern portion, and enemy tanks continued to roam the streets. Only one heavy machine gun was in firing condition. The sole method of communication was the artillery observer's radio, and this set was only capable of sending. There were 30 wounded in the command post, along with several prisoners. The last message Lieutenant Stafford received from Lieutenant Colonel Miner was to hold at all cost, and this, A Company continued to do.

Back in TETTINGEN, Lieutenant Colonel Miner had been notified by the regimental commander that the 2nd Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Olivious Martin, would relieve A and C Companies after dark. B Company would continue to hold their present positions. The 1st Battalion(-) would constitute the regimental reserve and bivouac in WOCHERN. Shortly after this message was received, Lieutenant Colonel Martin arrived in TETTINGEN and brought F Company with him. Attempts were made to employ F Company to assist A Company, but they were unsuccessful. The two battalion commanders made plans for the relief.

In the few remaining minutes before darkness, the tank destroyers, urged on by their company commander who had arrived on the scene, fired vigorously at several enemy tanks that were casually roaming the area in the vicinity of BUTZDORF. At least five tanks and one self-propelled

gun were hit. As darkness closed in, the area was lit by the glare of burning armor. (35)

The inadvisability of effecting any type of relief in BUTZDORF was discussed by the two battalion commanders and referred to the regimental commander. "Then, on the orders of the Commanding General, Division directed that BUTZDORF be abandoned since it could not readily be resupplied or relieved and since it had served its purpose of bringing about great attrition on the enemy's infantry. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Stafford independently arrived at a similar conclusion. Lacking the strength or the ammunition to counterattack and since the company's position was indefensible, Lieutenant Stafford decided to withdraw before he was rushed in the dark and overwhelmed." (36)

Lieutenant Stafford arranged with the artillery forward observer to have covering artillery fired as A Company withdrew at 1800 hours. Doors served as litters for the wounded unable to walk. It was sleeting and snowing and extremely dark as the company and its attachments withdrew. The battalion S-3 met them as they entered TETTINGEN and guided them back to WOCHERN.

Prisoners captured during the day verified that the 1st Battalion had been attacked by the German 110th Grenadier Regiment, supported by two companies of the 15th Tank Regiment, a self-propelled platoon, and an Ersatz battalion. An estimated 43 prisoners were captured, 110 killed and 180 wounded. Enemy armored vehicles destroyed amounted to 15. (37)

(35) Personal knowledge

(36) A-1, p. 129

(37) A-9, A- 10

In supporting the 1st battalion, the 919th Field Artillery Battalion and the regimental Cannon Company fired more rounds than for any other one day to that date, 3132 and 1143 rounds respectively. (38)

Except for three platoons of B Company, the 1st Battalion was relieved and back in WOCHERN by 2200 hours, 18 January. A hot meal was awaiting the men as they returned, the first in four days. The battalion could sleep in warm buildings with a relative assurance of not being awakened during the night.

To sum up the results of this battle: The 1st Battalion, 376th Infantry had captured its objective and had subsequently continued on to secure an additional assigned objective in the heart of the heavily fortified defenses of the SEIGFRIED Switch Line. A finger-like salient, more than a mile deep, was stubbornly defended for a period of five days against eight coordinated attempts by the enemy to reduce this dangerous breach in the entrance to their MOSELLE Corridor. From an Army and Corps standpoint, this attack and subsequent defense was extremely successful. It not only diverted heavy enemy reserves of men and armor intended for defense of the ARDENNES salient, but "opened the door" for a later attack which captured the important communications center of TRIER and the drive to the RHINE River. It is therefore to be concluded that the enemy considered the capture of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF most serious. (39)

The enemy losses, though they cannot be definitely enumerated, were estimated to be 850 killed, 150 captured

(38) A- 2, P. 70

(39) A- 5, P. 3 and 4

and eight tanks and 11 armored personnel carriers destroyed.

(40) The regiment lost 36 killed and 146 wounded during the five day action. Though ammunition expenditures of all types cannot be competently enumerated, the 70,000 rounds of caliber .30 fired by the battalion and somewhat over 10,000 rounds of 105mm fired by the 919th Field Artillery Battalion alone in their support of the five-day battle, will serve as an adequate basis for comparison. (41)

Reichmarschall Herman Goering, in an interview following his capture, was in effect paying tribute to the men of the 1st Battalion when he stated:

"When the first break in the Siefried Line was made near Aachen, Der Fuhrer was very irritated. After that came the breakthrough near Trier, and that was wholly incomprehensible. We could not believe that these fortifications could be penetrated. The breakthrough near Trier was particularly depressing. That breakthrough and the capture of the Remagen bridge were two great catastrophes for the German cause." (42)

As evidence of deserved honor and distinction gained by the 1st Battalion in the TETTINGEN-BUTZDORF action commanders at all echelons wholeheartedly indorsed General Orders 256, Headquarters 94th Infantry Division, 29 September 1945 which was later published as a Presidential Unit Citation in the form of General Orders 2, War Department, 5 January 1946. (43)

(40) A-15

(41) A-2 , p. 72, 88 Statement of Captain Edmund J. Dollard, February, 1950, member of 919th Field Artillery Battalion during the period 14-18 January 1945
A-15

(42) A-1 , p. 363

(43) A-15

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. LIMITED OBJECTIVE ATTACK

From the viewpoint of Third Army and XX Corps, the limited objective attack conducted by the 1st Battalion, 376th Infantry, was highly successful. That is, the three desired advantages were gained; the men received battle indoctrination, the enemy forces in the triangle were "pinned down", and the German Army was forced to commit to a secondary front elements of another infantry division plus one of its veteran armored divisions. In making a study of this action from the viewpoint of the 1st Battalion, it is the opinion that the attack was far too costly in terms of men and equipment lost. When attacking a heavily fortified position concerted efforts should be directed toward quickly breaking the defenses in sufficient width and depth to allow for exploitation. The most commonly accepted use of the limited objective attack is to re-establish and straighten battle lines or eliminate salients and re-entrants. When considering the enemy situation, the enemy defenses and the terrain in this instance, the type mission assigned the 1st Battalion is considered unsuitable for a limited objective attack. This attack initially produced a deep narrow salient which left the battalion most vulnerable to German forces that could be concentrated and were free to counter-attack repeatedly at any portion of the perimeter they chose. True, the 3rd Battalion conducted a similar limited objective attack 24 hours later, but the resulting salient was separated from the 1st Battalion by some 3000 yards. The commitment of the 2nd Battalion a day later to affect a juncture between

the 1st and 3rd Battalion salients was not entirely successful, nor was it deep enough. The enemy was still free to strike on either flank of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF. Had the battalions of the regiment been assigned objectives which were immediately adjacent and assaulted them simultaneously, it is believed that all objectives would have been taken more rapidly and with fewer casualties. Also the precarious position of the 1st Battalion during these five days of the action would have been avoided.

2. THE SECOND OBJECTIVE

The regimental order received by the battalion commander was explicit: "...atk at 140730 Jan. to seize and hold the town of TETTINGEN. Be prepared to repel counterattacks from the W, N or E." The battalion commander prepared and issued meticulous plans based on this assigned mission. The objective was seized and defenses against counterattack established in record time. Seizure of the second objective, BUTZDORF, was ordered at a time when the troops had become "defensive minded". The additional mission was received as a great surprise, thus considerable confusion existed during the preparation for and the seizure of BUTZDORF. It is my opinion that had the regimental commander and staff considered it even a remote possibility that the second objective would be assigned, the regimental order should have made some provisions for continuing the attack. The 1st Battalion was not prepared to attack BUTZDORF on short notice, yet speed was of the essence for the element of surprise had already been lost. The assigned jump off time precluded making a detailed ground or map reconnaissance, let alone issue necessary orders and get into the proper attack formations.

Had the battalion been assigned the second objective initially, or been prompted to prepare for continuation of the attack after seizing TETTINGEN, it is believed that BUTZDORF would have been secured as easily as TETTINGEN with fewer casualties and stronger defenses would have resulted.

3. THE USE OF A TOWN PLAN

In the planning phase, the advisability of preparing town plans of TETTINGEN for issuance to include squad leaders is noteworthy. Not only were the plans and orders of the battalion commander and company commanders facilitated and clarified, but each man of the battalion had a clear picture of the objective as a whole, as well as plans of action and a detailed assignment of his individual mission. The value of this town plan can best be measured in the efficient seizure of TETTINGEN. Had a town plan not been used, it is believed that it would not have been possible for A Company to attack BUTZDORF when it did, and enemy counterattacks during the first day and night might not have been repelled.

4. THE FAILURE TO ATTACK DOMINANT TERRAIN

This action illustrates the consequences of defending towns situated in low areas without first securing adjoining dominating terrain. While the battalion itself cannot be criticized for the attack and occupation of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF, the headquarters that initiated the attack order should have fully considered the fate of any force ordered to defend such a salient. It was well known that the high ground adjacent to these two towns was strongly fortified and defended, yet no effort was made to secure the dominant ridges. Had that portion of MUNZINGEN RIDGE adjacent to TETTINGEN and

and BUTZDORF been secured prior to the attack, it is believed that the Germans would have elected to withdraw from the two towns for our artillery and mortars could have made them untenable.

5. THE ANTITANK DEFENSE

The battalion was tardy in preparing complete and timely antitank defenses, especially in BUTZDORF. Four tank destroyers remained in TETTINGEN throughout the entire operation and the battalion Antitank Platoon occupied positions to the south of the town. At no time during the action were there any antitank weapons, other than bazookas, in BUTZDORF. It would appear that at least a portion of these weapons might have been employed to much better advantage in BUTZDORF where there was greater danger from German tanks. It wasn't until it had been definitely confirmed that enemy armor was in the area in large numbers that the battalion strengthened its antitank defenses with additional mines. The platoon of antitank guns requested from the regimental Antitank Company on the morning of 18 January, arrived too late to be profitably employed. Though the mines and the courageous fighting of the bazooka teams in A Company took their toll of armored vehicles, it was impossible to prevent some enemy tanks from penetrating the position. True, this was the first big action for the battalion, and the battalion commander accepted the recommendations of the attached tank destroyer platoon leader and his own battalion antitank specialist. The platoon leader of the tank destroyers had assured the battalion commander that from their positions in TETTINGEN their guns could better cover the terrain surrounding BUTZDORF. Insufficient thought

was given to enemy tanks that might penetrate the defenses of that town and then it could not be visualized that two of the battalion 57mm antitank guns would be knocked out in their positions south of TETTINGEN. Neither could the battalion commander have anticipated that tank destroyer crews would fail to man their guns at a decisive time. The failure to fully utilize available weapons to implement the antitank defense resulted in a weakened battalion defense. Had one platoon of 57mm antitank guns, or two tank destroyers, been employed in BUTZDORF on the first day of the operation, it is believed that the enemy tanks would have been unable to enter the town. Also, it is believed that the mere existence of these weapons in BUTZDORF would have provided a favorable morale factor which would have strengthened the defense from the standpoint of the individual defender.

6. THE CONDUCT OF THE DEFENSE OF TETTINGEN AND BUTZDORF

The successful defense of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF can be attributed to the tenacity and courage of the defending forces coupled with an effective artillery and mortar fire plan. The defense against attacking enemy infantry was particularly strong even though the enemy had the advantage of observation on the two towns from three directions. The strength of the defenses can be attributed to the fact that optimum advantage was taken of the concealment and cover that is offered in a built-up area. The automatic weapon support plan was well integrated with the riflemen's fire and took advantage of the long fields of fire offered to the west and north. The fire from the heavy machine guns were interlocked with those of the light machine guns to form an

uninterrupted band of fire around the three vulnerable areas of both towns. The fire support provided by the organic 81mm mortars, attached 4.2" mortars, regimental cannons and division and corps artillery were well integrated with the automatic fire plan and easily obtainable through the use of wire or radio communications. The effectiveness of the defense was illustrated in the alertness with which the integrated fire plan was put to use, even during the hours of darkness, to stop and repel repeated attempts of enemy infantry to cause a major breach of the protective wall of fire. After each counterattack, available forces were re-disposed to strengthen any weakened portions of the defense. The nature of the defenses of TETTINGEN provided a limited defense in depth for BUTZDORF and assisted the defenders therein in restoring any portion of the east and west perimeter that had been penetrated. Had the battalion prepared their positions outside of the towns and not paid special attention to their well integrated fire plan it is almost certain that it could never have withstood the masses of infantry and tanks that were hurled at TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF.

7. THE FAILURE TO REDUCE PILLBOXES

The failure of regiment to employ sufficient forces to reduce the numerable pillboxes on MUNZINGEN RIDGE, to the east of TETTINGEN and BUTZDORF, proved costly to the 1st Battalion. From these pillboxes the Germans were provided protected positions from which they could observe and place fire on almost every movement of the battalion during the day. And at night, the enemy in the nearest pillboxes had protected listening posts from which they could call for fire on the slightest noises. The advantage provided the

enemy in allowing them to retain these positions made it extremely difficult for the 1st Battalion to maintain wire communications and deliver badly needed supplies to the besieged towns. This was especially true in the case of A Company in BUTZDORF. Then, too, 2nd Battalion's failure to reduce all the pillboxes between the 1st and 3rd Battalion positions greatly interfered with B Company's efforts to maintain continuous contact between the two battalions. Enemy patrols and infiltration parties made repeated thrusts against the extended lines of B Company in order to supply those pillboxes still holding out behind the line. Though the enemy in these pillboxes were cut off from their lines, they were still able to observe the movements of the men in B Company and direct or call for fire on them from both the front and rear. With the 1st Battalion holding its dangerous salient and at the same time maintaining contact with the 3rd Battalion, it did not have sufficient forces to reduce these fortifications. Had the regiment formed assault teams composed of men from the Antitank Company, attached engineers and reserve troops it is believed that the pillboxes could have been reduced in a minimum of time and with minimum losses. The 1st Battalion defenses would then have been immeasurably stronger and fewer casualties would have been sustained.

LESSONS

1. The employment of limited-objective attacks against a heavily fortified position in depth should only be conducted when such attacks can be closely coordinated with other similar offensives which can be mutually supported.

2. When it is even remotely possible that successive objectives may be assigned after capture of an initial objective, the assigned mission should definitely incorporate provisions for resumption of the attack.

3. Town plans should be prepared and used as a basis for issuing orders in the attack or defense of built-up areas.

4. The seizure of dominant terrain should be a foremost consideration to insure subsequent successes when attacking a heavily fortified position in depth.

5. Antitank defenses form an integral part of any defense plan, therefore, must be closely coordinated with all other defensive weapons and prepared simultaneously.

6. The application of the accepted principles of defense will insure the strongest possible defenses within a strongly fortified position.

7. In order to obtain the strongest possible defense after an attack within a fortified area, all pillboxes that are capable of firing into or observing the defensive area must be reduced simultaneously with that attack.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. Cooperation of the highest degree must be maintained between the Service Company Commander and the regimental staff.
2. Replacements for key positions should be trained at least three deep. It takes time to train officers and non-commissioned officers for technical jobs.
3. The T/O should be enlarged to enable Service Company to operate without calling on rifle companies for labor help.
4. Where possible, men should be drawn from rifle companies for the various sections of Service Company. A knowledge of the personal hardship of the rifleman makes a better service man.
5. The T/E should include additional equipment during combat. Such items as bulldozers, refrigeration units, and in the tropics a regimental ice cream freezer.
6. No officer should be assigned to Service Company if he doesn't like the details of supply work.
7. The Service Company commander should not become too involved in company administration, but act as the asst regimental S-4. He should be able to function as S-4 at any time.
8. The mission of Service Company should be drilled into all members of the unit. That mission is -- To relieve the combat elements of all possible administrative duties concerning supply and evacuation.
9. All officers and men should be fully aware of the problems of supply. Many man hours of labor and millions of dollars worth of equipment are lost by unnecessary waste.